

Ceremony welcomes new AF secretary



Photo by TSgt Jim Varhegyi

Dr. James Roche, secretary of the Air Force (right), and his host, Gen Michael Ryan, Air Force chief of staff (left), inspect the troops June 6 at Bolling Air Force Base, Washington D.C., during a full honors review and welcome ceremony for the new secretary.

By Larry Clavette
Air Force Print News

WASHINGTON — Dr. James Roche, secretary of the Air Force, pledged to serve the way Air Force men and women do every day throughout the world — with integrity, selflessness and in earnest pursuit of excellence. He made this pledge during a welcoming ceremony honoring him June 6 at Bolling Air Force Base, D.C.

Gen Michael Ryan, Air Force chief of staff, was host of the 40-minute ceremony featuring 102 people from the Air Force Honor Guard and the 22 musicians in the Air Force Ceremonial Brass Band.

Besides unfurling the secretary's flag, the ceremony included an inspection of the troops by Secretary Roche, and a pass in review in honor of the secretary.

"The 700,000 officers, airmen and civilians welcome you to our Air Force family and thank you for your commitment and sacrifices you'll make to serve with us," Gen Ryan said.

Gen Ryan presented Secretary Roche with an AF leather jacket.

Secretary Roche thanked everyone for attending the ceremony and said he was humbled by the generosity.

"I join a flourishing team of active-duty airmen, civil servants, guardsmen, reservists, contractors and advocates," Sec Roche said. "You have a strong legacy despite being the youngest service, and a tradition of high standards and mission success. You have earned the admiration of our nation, you have earned the respect of our world, and you have earned the promise of a bright future."

America's Air Force team is justifiably proud of its incredible achievements including the current operations over Iraq in operations Northern Watch and Southern Watch; numerous other combat operations and humanitarian missions; and most recently, the implementation of the expeditionary aerospace force concept, and a reversal of the downward trend in recruiting, Secretary Roche said.

"In the realm of aerospace power, you fly the best, train the best, maintain the best," he said. "As you put it, 'No one comes close.'"

Secretary Roche was sworn in as the Air Force's 20th secretary June 1.

New blood donor rules

DOD seeks to mend the looming rift

By Rudi Williams
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON (AFPN) — The Department of Defense is working behind the scenes to create a national standard for collecting blood as the American Red Cross prepares to adopt new donor rules in September.

Red Cross officials said the rules stem from concerns about the spread of "mad cow" disease in Europe. The Red Cross plans not to take donations from persons who, at any time since 1980, spend or have spent a cumulative three months or more in the United Kingdom, or a cumulative six months or more in any one or more European countries, or received a blood transfusion in the United Kingdom.

DOD and the Red Cross currently follow the Food and Drug Administration's lead, said Army Col Mike Fitzpatrick, director of the Armed Services Blood Program. He said the policy for the past two years has been to defer persons indefinitely as donors if they resided in the United Kingdom between 1980 and 1996 for a cumulative six months or more.

The current deferral rule affects 5 percent or less of DOD's donor population worldwide, he estimated. Implementing the Red Cross' new policy throughout Europe would make about 25 percent of the active-duty force ineligible to donate blood, he said.

DOD will continue to follow the FDA, he said, but the FDA has not agreed to the Red Cross' policy — and two donor standards will be in use unless it does. DOD does not want that.

DOD officials said the better solution is a national standard for blood donors.

Officials at DOD, FDA, Human and Health Services and the Red Cross are working to establish a mutually agreed upon standard.

"We've prepared draft guidance and are waiting (for) the final determination. We need to know that before we could do anything," Col Fitzpatrick said. "Because

of the way the FDA regulates us, it's going to require time to train people, put together standard operating procedures and a recruitment campaign to get donors. That's why it's taking the Red Cross until September. We'll have to do the same things, but we can't train anyone until we know what we're training them for."

DOD meets its needs using today's donor standards, Col Fitzpatrick said. Even using the Red Cross' more restrictive policy, "We still think we could collect the blood we need within DOD by increasing recruitment efforts, command sponsorship and command emphasis on the need to donate blood," he said.

DOD collects about 100,000 units of blood per year. It must maintain that rate to have enough blood for troops in Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina and other areas where safe supplies would be hard to find and tap, Col Fitzpatrick said.

"With all the testing and screening we're doing to blood donors, the blood supply is the safest it has ever been," he said. "So, it's safe to give and receive blood."

Deployed servicemembers are at less risk than casual travelers in Europe because military people often eat either Meals Ready to Eat which do not buy meat from the United Kingdom, Col Fitzpatrick said.

"With all the testing ... the blood supply is the safest it has ever been."

Army Col Mike Fitzpatrick
Armed Services Blood Program director

COMMENTARY

Reasons why you should give blood

By 2d Lt Shannon Nyberg
Public affairs office

If you haven't been guilty of uttering them yourself, you've at least heard the excuses for not donating blood. I don't have the time; it's dangerous and it's going to hurt; or it's not good for my health. Actually, nothing could be further from the truth.

So you don't have the time to donate a little blood? Donating is really very simple and very quick. The whole process shouldn't take more than 45 to 60 minutes, with the donation portion only taking about six to 10 minutes. Less than an hour to donate one pint of blood isn't asking too much when you consider that one pint of blood, when separated into components, can save the lives of up to three people.

You're hesitant to donate blood because you consider it to be a dangerous and painful process? Donating blood is very safe and everything is done to make you comfortable. The supplies used during your donation are sterile, used only once, and then incinerated. There is absolutely no possibility that you'll be exposed to a needle that is being reused.

Previous to you being allowed to donate, you'll be given a mini physical to ensure your safety. Your blood pressure, tem-

perature and pulse will be taken to make sure you're up to donating that day. You'll then be taken to a donor bed where you'll have your arm cleaned with antiseptic before your blood is taken.

You're not sure donating is a good idea because you've heard it's not good for your health and hard on your heart? Well, recent medical studies have shown that blood donation may instead reduce the risk for heart disease. In 1997, researchers at the Kansas University Medical Center in Kansas City, Mo., found that non-smoking men who donated blood had a 30 percent reduced risk for cardiovascular events. Those studied had fewer incidents of heart attacks, bypasses, and strokes than those who didn't donate blood.

I can understand the fear of donating blood if you've never donated before. I remember how I felt ... scared. I'm not quite sure what I was afraid of, I guess it was just a fear of the unknown as I was completely unfamiliar with the process. But once it's all over and you're drinking that orange juice and eating those cookies, you feel a sense of pride in knowing that your small sacrifice could result in the lives of three mothers, fathers, sons, or daughters being saved.

So the next time you're given a chance to donate blood, remember the facts. Please, give blood.